

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Humor as a Mirror of Political Reality: Anti-Communist humor in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in comparative perspective</b>
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>Arevik Zadoyan</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>Karel Svoboda, Ph.D.</b>

*Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.*

### **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	17
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>The proposed grade</b>	<b>B</b>

You can even use the decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

### **Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

**1) Theoretical background:** Similarly to methodology, the theoretical background could have been better explained. It is not to say that it is missing there, but the part that would explain theoretical side of the thesis would be helpful, especially for understanding the aims and contribution of the thesis to the general debate. Literature review of general discussion is also missing. Both these would set the thesis more firmly into a context of current research.

**2) Contribution:** The topic of political jokes is unquestionably extremely interesting. Comparing approaches and attitudes of two societies based on their sense of humor is great field for research. However, here, I would say that the thesis could have been more original. The fact that each sentence is referenced leads to the conclusion that the author did not analyze the jokes, but made a compilation of existing literature. It is natural that the thoughts and ideas are borrowed from elsewhere, reflecting what was already done, but relying 100% on work of others should be avoided. For instance in the case of reflecting Marx or Lenin, I would expect links to their original work "Ironically, Karl Marx saw ideology as "a form of false consciousness" that existed in order to "mask or 'rationalize' the unpleasant realities of a given socioeconomic system".<sup>159</sup> Lenin, on the other hand, massively stretched the meaning of the term making it equivalent to theory and knowledge.<sup>160</sup>" (page 26)  
Generally, I enjoyed reading the thesis. The author, nevertheless, should leave others' comments and go beyond them. This would highlight originality of the thesis.

### **3) Methods:**

Firstly, the methods used should be better explained. Author uses comparative approach, which is logical, however, we are not sure about the criteria of the comparisons. The author speaks about length of jokes (soviet providing context, whereas Czechoslovak being shorter etc.), but the criteria is missing in the explanation. Furthermore, he provides a context of the group of jokes and then gives examples of the

jokes, quite logically, I would say. However, still, I was missing some sort of explanation of categories of jokes that would reveal the differences in humor patterns.

**4) Literature:**

At least from my point of view, literature is rich and absolutely adequate to addressing the questions author aims to address. However, not being a specialist in this particular topic, I would humbly leave the judgement about the literature used to the second reviewer. I was only missing a deeper discussion of existing literature..

**5) Manuscript form:** From the very beginning, I was very surprised by the style of writing of this dissertation. The author uses references after each single sentence, in some cases direct citations, in other only paraphrase. Referencing should be limited to some adequate number, as it simply distracts concentration.

I was not sure about the structure of the paper. Although initial description of Czechoslovak and Soviet humor and their subsequent comparison is logical, I could not find a firm logic within analyses themselves. Relatively long descriptions of communist reality are in some cases only vaguely related to the joke discussed.

Nevertheless, formal side of the thesis is without serious problems. I would only suggest sorting sources into primary and secondary, but it is not a serious remark.

**DATE OF EVALUATION: 07.09.2020**

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**Referee Signature**